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Chapter 24

The Aorist and the Perfect in Mano

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The foci of this paper are the semantic differences between two perfective constructions in the Mano language, the Aorist and the Perfect. The paper is based on Östen Dahl's classic questionnaire, as well as various sources of natural speech data, including narratives, routine conversations, and ritual speech, Christian and traditional. The core semantic property of the Mano Perfect is event relevance, which is confirmed by the annulled result test. The core function of the Aorist is being the narrative tense. The paper also includes discussion of two secondary functions of the Perfect and the Aorist, namely, anticipation of future events and transposition to the past. The secondary functions confirm the basic distinction between the Aorist and the Perfect, the latter maintaining a closer connection with the reference point.

1 Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the functions fulfilled by the Aorist and the Perfect¹ constructions in Mano (< Mande). Mano is a Mande language spoken in Guinea and Liberia by approximately 400,000 speakers. The data for this paper comes from Östen Dahl's questionnaire on perfect (Dahl 2000), as well as from spontaneous texts of various genres: routine exchanges; narratives; oral Bible translations; traditional ritual speech. The examples are marked according to the speech genre: *el.* for elicitation, *conv.* for routine exchanges, *narr.* for narratives and *rit.* for ritual speech. The excerpts from the oral Bible translations² and the excerpts from the Dahl's questionnaire are made recognizable by an explicit

¹Following Haspelmath (2010), grammatical labels with an initial capital refer to language-specific categories (the Mano Aorist and Perfect), while lower-case spelling is used for comparative concepts of aorist and perfect.

²Bible verses in English are taken from the NIV 2017 with few exceptions.



reference to the source. All elicitation and speech data were collected during fieldwork among the Mano in 2009–2016.

A note on terminology will be helpful at the outset. I divide TAMP constructions in Mano into perfective, imperfective and aspectually unspecified. The term “perfective” is thus used here not to label a specific construction, but as a general classificatory term bringing together several aspectual constructions, including the Aorist and the Perfect, which are the focus of the present paper. Although descriptive and typological works often classify perfect as a category apart, it is useful to consider the Mano Perfect a type of perfective construction in contrast with the Aorist. The two constructions clearly belong to the same family of constructions: as we will see in §2.3, negative Perfect is formed on the basis of the negative Aorist construction with addition of specific adverbs. Similarly, the term “Aorist” is rare in the literature and was clearly dispreferred by Comrie (1976) (in contrast with the European tradition represented by Plungian (2016) or Maïsak (2016)). However, it seemed useful to use the term “Aorist” as a label of a specific construction characterized by the perfective aspect, to avoid confusion with perfective as a generic term.

This paper is organized as follows. I begin by presenting a summary of Mano tense, aspect, modality and polarity system in §2 giving special attention to the constructions with perfective meaning. §3 is dedicated to the aorist construction. §4 focuses on the functions of the perfect construction. §5 and §6 explore two secondary functions of the Perfect and the Aorist, namely, anticipation and transposition. Finally, §7 is a discussion of the Aorist–Perfect opposition in a typological perspective.

2 Perfective constructions in Mano

2.1 Structure of Mano TAMP system

TAMP distinctions in Mano do not show up at the level of any one specific marker, but rather at the level of a construction which includes an auxiliary or a copula, a verb in a specific form, and, in certain cases, some other elements, such as adverbs or auxiliary verbs.

There are two types of TAMP constructions in Mano: constructions featuring a copula and constructions featuring an auxiliary marker (AUX). The auxiliary markers (AUX) index the subject’s person and number; these markers are organized in series expressing tense, aspect, modality and polarity. Mano counts eleven series of auxiliaries: perfect, past, existential, imperfective, conjoint, nega-

tive, conjunctive, prohibitive, subjunctive, prospective, and dubitative. The word order in constructions with auxiliaries is: S – AUX – (O) – V. The word order in copula constructions is: S – (O) – COP. For a full description of the Mano aspectual system, see Khachaturyan (2015).

Table 1 presents the perfect and the past auxiliaries.

Table 1: Past and perfect auxiliary series in Mano

	1SG	2SG	3SG	1PL	2PL	3PL
past	<i>ŋ (mā)</i>	<i>ī (bā)</i>	<i>ē (ā)</i>	<i>kō (kṣā)</i>	<i>kā</i>	<i>ō (wā)</i>
perfect	<i>māà</i>	<i>bāà</i>	<i>āà</i>	<i>kṣāà</i>	<i>kāà</i>	<i>wāà</i>

The direct object of transitive verbs is obligatorily expressed by a noun phrase or a pronoun of the basic (non-subject) series. Past auxiliaries distinguish between a simple and a portemanteau form. The latter is used if the direct object is a 3rd person SG pronoun; such markers are put in brackets in Table 1. For perfect auxiliaries there is no distinction between a simple and a portemanteau form. Compare the following two examples: in the first example, a simple and a portemanteau form are contrasted. Note the absence of this contrast in a similar context in the second example.

- (1) a. *ē* *ló*.
 3SG.PST go
 ‘(S)he left.’ (narr.)
- b. *ā* *zē*.
 3SG.PST>3SG kill
 ‘S/he killed him.’ (narr.)
- (2) a. *āà* *ló*.
 3SG.PRF go
 ‘(S)he has left.’ (narr.)
- b. *āà* *zē*.
 3SG.PRF>3SG kill
 ‘(S)he has killed him.’ (narr.)

The verb can bear segmental and/or tonal morphemes. Note the example below with the imperfective construction, where the verb *ló* ‘go’ is used in the imperfective form, *lō* ‘go:IPFV’.

- (3) lɛ̀ɛ lɔ̃.
3SG.IPFV go:IPFV
'(S)he leaves.' (narr.)

2.2 Affirmative perfective constructions

The aorist construction is formed with the auxiliary of the past series (PST) and a verb in its lexical form, see (1)³

The perfect construction is formed with the auxiliary of the perfect series (PRF) and a verb in its lexical form, see (2).

The experiential value is expressed by the perfect construction with the adverb *dō* '(at least) once; never':

- (4) kɔ̃ɔ̀ɔ̀ mā dō.
1PL.PRF>3SG hear once
'We have heard (about) it.' (conv.)

Other perfective constructions in Mano include: resultative construction and recent past construction.

Like many African languages (Carlson 1992), Mano has a consecutive construction. It is formed with an auxiliary of the conjoint series (JNT) and a verb in the conjoint form. As its central function is to convey events on the main narrative event line, it functions like a perfective construction (and can often be replaced by the aorist construction).

- (5) ē lè ā vòlò, áà yílí vò.
3SG.PST place DEM stub.out 3SG.JNT tree fell:JNT
'He cleared the field and felled the trees.' (narr.)

2.3 Negative perfective constructions

The negative aorist construction is formed with the negative auxiliary (NEG) and the negative particle *gbā* preceding the direct object; the verb is in the lexical form.

³The past auxiliary series is aspectually neutral, because the series is used not only in the aorist construction, but also in the past imperfective construction which is not formed parallel to the imperfective construction, but rather parallel to the durative construction, see Khachaturyan (2015: 195-196).

- (6) lèé gbāā gè.
 3SG.NEG NEG>3SG see
 ‘He didn’t see her.’ (narr.)

The negative perfect construction is formed with the negative auxiliary and the particle *néŋ* ‘yet’, following the verb in the lexical form.

- (7) ñ sō dō lèé kòò néŋ.
 1SG.POSS cloth INDEF 3SG.NEG dry yet
 ‘Some of my clothes have not dried yet.’ (el.)

The negative experiential construction is formed like the perfect construction; the difference is that the particle *néŋ* is replaced by the particle *dō* ‘once, never’.

- (8) kòó mī dō gè zèē dō.
 1PL.NEG person INDEF see here once
 ‘We have never seen anyone here.’ (el.)

Mano also has negative resultative construction.

The present paper will be limited to the constructions of the Aorist and the Perfect, although a full analysis should include all affirmative and negative perfective constructions, including the resultative constructions, the analytic construction of recent past, and the consecutive construction. For some details on the distribution between the Aorist and the consecutive construction in the narrative, see §3.1.

3 Aorist

3.1 Narrative

The Aorist is the default tense in the narrative. The consecutive construction has a limited distribution, usually occurring when the subject is coreferential to the subject of the previous clause, or with the speech verbs. Moreover, the consecutive construction does not occur if the reported events occurred in the recent past. As for the perfect construction, when used within the narrative, it is usually limited to the direct speech or to the coda of the narrative (see §4).

- (9) \bar{n} táá lūú, \bar{n} bá lá mènē là, \bar{e} \bar{n} sǔǔ dǔ,
 3SG.PST walk bushes 1SG.PST step snake on 3SG.PST 1SG tooth stop
 \bar{n} gèlè sí, mā pá á ká, \bar{e} gā.
 1SG.PST stone take 1SG.SG>3SG strike 3SG with 3SG.PST die
 ‘I walked in the bushes, I stepped on a snake, it bit me, I took a stone, I hit
 it with it, it died.’ (adapted from Dahl 2000: 801, ex. 8)

3.2 Temporal adverbs

The Aorist, as opposed to the Perfect, freely combines with temporal adverbs (see also (15a)).

- (10) \bar{i} yī zē pǎ sè?
 3SG.PST sleep kill yesterday.night well
 ‘(Question asked in the early morning) Did you sleep well last night?’
 (conv.)

3.3 Annulled result

The Aorist is the only perfective form that can be used in the contexts with annulled result.

- (11) $k\bar{a}$ dà yéíŋwò yí, *mais* yéíŋwò wáá ká.
 1PL.PST>3SG fall joke in but joke NEG.COP>3SG with
 ‘We considered it a joke (lit.: we fell in a joke), but it isn’t a joke.’ (conv.)

Only the Aorist is possible in combination with the verb *pē* ‘fail to do something’ (be engaged, voluntarily or involuntarily, in an action that was interrupted before its natural termination):

- (12) à gǔǔ \bar{e} $p\bar{e}$ é ló yíí wì kpàá gbínī yāā ká.
 REF boat 3SG.PST fail 3SG.CONJ go water under fish heavy DEM with
 ‘The boats did not sink (lit.: failed to sink), loaded with fish (lit.: with the
 heavy fish).’ (and they filled both boats so that they began to sink, NIV, Lc
 5:7).

Note the aorist construction followed by the perfect construction, the latter expressing an event which annulled the result of the former:

- (13) ò kálémò ē nī ñ ká, mǎà gè.
 1SG.POSS house 3SG.PST forget 1SG with 1SG.PRF>3SG see
 ‘I lost my house, but (now) I have seen it’. (conv.)

4 Perfect

4.1 Recent past

The perfect construction is extremely frequent in the everyday ROUTINE EXCHANGES:

- (14) ǎǎ bũ bèle?
 2SG.PRF rice eat
 ‘Have you eaten (rice, typical food)?’ (conv.)

The Perfect combines with a very restricted set of temporal adverbs, which even excludes some adverbs denoting recent past. Thus, the adverb *pénēē* ‘today’ can combine with both the Aorist and the Perfect, while only the Aorist can combine with the adverb *dēēká* ‘recently, now’.

- (15) a. ñ/*mǎà nũ dēēká.
 1SG.PST/1SG.PRF come recently
 ‘I have just arrived.’ (conv.)
 b. ñ/mǎà nũ pénēē.
 11SG.PST/1SG.PRF come today
 ‘I have arrived today.’ (conv.)

When the perfect construction appears in the narratives, it is most frequently used in *direct* (16) and *indirect speech* (17).

- (16) áà gèè: ”mǎà mā, òǒ ló gbǎà à gbēē
 3SG.JNT>3SG say:JNT 1SG.PRF>3SG hear 1SG.NEG go now 3SG another
 kē-è.”
 do-GER
 ‘He says: I understand (lit.: I’ve understood), I won’t do it anymore.’ (narr.)

- (17) *tó ké mā bō dàá nō wē,*
 stay like.this 1SG.PST>3SG implement fall.GER.with only DEM
lāà gèè kélè māà gā.
 3SG.IPFV>3SG say that 1SG.PRF die
 ‘(A person relating his accident when he was hit by a motorbike and
 fainted). As I_i stayed like this, fallen down, she_j said that I_i had died (lit.:
 have died).’ (narr.)

Quotation and indirect speech fall apart from the narrative line; it may be suggested that quotes and indirect speech imitate the routine conversation, which would explain the usage of the Perfect.

A piece of evidence supporting this explanation is that the Perfect is frequent in the direct speech in oral Bible translations performed during the Sunday service. Again, it may be seen as an imitation of the routine conversation practice, where the Perfect is common. (Note that Östen Dahl (2014) chose to study direct speech in the Bible separately to get an idea of the routinely spoken language, as opposed to its usage in the narrative.) The influence of French can be minimized: in the French source the *passé composé* form was used, which in modern French does not have the perfect function anymore. Moreover, Mano, including Mano translators, are not fluent in French and it is unlikely that French exercises grammatical interference. Note the usage of the pronoun of the 2nd person *ī* ‘your’, through which it can be seen that the speech is indeed addressed – in this case, to the city of Jerusalem:

- (18) *kō ŋwūméfōmī āā ī yókò kē āā lò gbèkèñī ī ká.*
 2SG savior 3SG.PRF 2SG enemy do 3SG.JNT go:JNT far 2SG with
 ‘Our savior has made your enemies go far from you.’ (he has turned back
 your enemy, NIV, Ze 3:15)

4.2 Relevant past

The perfect construction can be used to relate a past event regardless of the time when it happened, provided it is still relevant (specifically, if there has not been any intervening event that annulled the effect of the event in question, in which case the Aorist is used, see §3.3).

- (19) *māà mīnīṣṣò pèlè kpó ṅ sónó.*
 1SG.PRF million two put 1SG near
 [Question: I was told you are collecting money for your new motorbike.

How much money have you collected so far?] ‘I have collected two million (Guinean francs).’ (adapted from Dahl 2000: 803, ex. 42)

The Aorist is somewhat acceptable in these contexts. It becomes unacceptable when the event is in focus, which happens when the assertion of the event is made as a response to a yes/no question or in contrast to what has been said before.

- (20) gbāō, āā/*ē gā.
no 3SG.PRF/3SG.PST die
‘[Question: Is the chief still alive?] No, he has died.’ (adapted from Dahl 2000:801, ex. 3)

The contrast between the Perfect and the Aorist can be seen when the description of some past events serves to explain the current situation. The following example is an adopted example 46 from Dahl’s questionnaire (Dahl 2000: 803). The stimulus question was [A is setting out on a long journey on an old motorbike. B asks: What if something goes wrong with your motorbike on the way? A responds:]

- (21) māā/*ŋ pàà ló, māā/*ŋ séènè ló.
1SG.PRF/1SG.PST piece buy 1SG.PRF/1SG.PST chain buy
‘I’ve bought (spare) parts, I have bought a chain.’ (I can replace them if needed.)

Here the response is configured as a little narrative. However, it is intended to answer B’s question and serves as an explanation of how A got prepared for his trip, and not just to relate past events. Had the Aorist been the construction used in this context, it would not have had any relation to the question asked, and the answer would have sounded odd. The key semantic contribution of the marking with the Perfect, then, is that it underlines the relevance of the actions A undertook for the current (and future) situation.

The perfect construction may combine with adverbs like *pélè* ‘1. early, 2. a while ago’, meaning that the action took place in the relatively remote past, but assuming it is still relevant:

- (22) āā gbè à mò pélē ŋwó yīè kē-è ká.
3SG.PRF put 3SG on early thing good do-GER with
‘He started doing good things a long time ago.’ (narr.)

The prophecies, especially those of the Old Testament, are often translated with the perfect construction, which conveys their eternal relevance.

- (23) kò né dēē wāà nō kō lēē.
 1PL.POSS child new 3PL.PRF>3SG give 1PL to
 ‘A new child of ours, they have given him to us.’ (For to us a child is born, NIV, Is 9:6).

4.3 Coda of a narrative

The Perfect often marks the concluding sentence in a narrative or other type of text describing a sequence of events. Thus, the descriptions of procedures are often concluded by the perfect construction, as in the following description of how to make an aluminum kettle:

- (24) ...wā pēēsélé bēē bō yī, kē wāà gbōō
 3PL.PST>3SG sand too take.off there at.that.moment 3PL.PRF kettle
 bēī.
 make
 ‘...you also took away the sand, so you’ve made a kettle.’ (narr.)

In narratives proper, the perfect construction often marks concluding events, as in the following three propositions closing a fairy tale:

- (25) a. sī lé āà pā.
 spider mouth 3SG.PRF fill
 ‘Spider was surprised.’
 b. yé wāà gáá fēē ē sī gí āà fū.
 when 3PL.PRF>3SG drag long TOP spider stomach 3SG.PRF pierce
 ‘After they dragged him for a long time, Spider’s stomach pierced.’
 c. sī āà gā, là nōō wāà ŋwēŋ léē là.
 spider 3SG.PRF die 3SG.POSS child.PL 3PL.PRF disperse leave on
 ‘Spider died and its children dispersed on the leaves.’ (narr.)

When I asked my language assistant to explain this sequence of perfect constructions, he said that the narrator took his time finishing the story, otherwise one perfect construction as in (25c) would be enough.

Similarly, the Perfect can be used (although rarely) to mark an intermediate coda ending a subepisode in the narrative.

- (26) *tó ē néfú bē mē, ē ē léyí sùò à là. à*
 then 3SG.PST child DEM beat 3SG.PST 3SG.REFL saliva spit 3SG on 3SG
mé āà bā.
 surface 3SG.PRF cover.with.wounds
 ‘Then she drew him down, then she beat the child and spit on him. He
 became all covered with wounds.’ (narr.)

Typical situations expressed by the Aorist are either 1. atemporal, as in the case of narratives, 2. embedded in the time frame indicated by the temporal adverbs and detached from the moment of enunciation, or 3. irrelevant for the present situation, as in the case of the contexts with annulled result. The Perfect, on the contrary, is typically used when the described situation is closely related to the moment of enunciation: by bearing relevant consequences, including (in some cases) by being recent.

In what follows, I will describe two secondary functions of the Perfect and the Aorist, namely, anticipation and transposition, in which their basic aspectual characteristics will be supported.

5 Anticipation

Both the Perfect and the Aorist can be used with an anticipatory function, when a future event is expressed as if it has already happened (cf. Hanks 1990: 224). The Perfect is usually used when the event is expected to occur in the nearest future:

- (27) *māà nū!*
 1SG.PRF come
 ‘I’ll be right back! (lit.: I have come!)’ (conv.)

The Aorist can also be used with an anticipatory function. Firstly, it can replace the imperfective or the future construction in a sequence of events in the Imperfective/Future:

- (28) *î lô, î nā ē lô, bā nòò yàākā ō lô.*
 2SG.IPFV go:IPFV 2SG wife 2SG.PST go 2SG.POSS child three 3PL.PST go
 ‘You will go, your wife will go, three of your children will go.’ (conv.)

Secondly, it is used in ritual formulas of benediction (29). Importantly, the action is not necessarily supposed to be realized immediately (although it may).

- (29) *kṣā lè gè zòkpólà àpènézè kó 65 yī!*
 1PL.PST>3SG place see peace for.that 1PL.CONJ arrive there
 ‘(Ritual formula framing a benediction) We will see it in peace, in order for it to obtain, let us arrive there.’ (rit.)

6 Transposition

By TRANSPOSITION (Hanks 1990: 217-223) I understand the function in which the reference point does not coincide with the moment of enunciation, but is transposed on the time scale: in the case of Mano, the reference point is usually transposed to the past. A term most often used for the forms fulfilling this function is “anterior” (Bybee et al. 1994) or “pluperfect” (Sichinava 2013). This function is typically associated with perfect forms (Klein 1992; 1994) to the point that perfects themselves are sometimes called “anterior”. However, as I will make clear below, in Mano both the Aorist and the Perfect can function as “anterior”.

The following two examples are taken from narratives; the events of the main narrative line are expressed by the aorist construction. The background events which occurred immediately prior to the events of the main story line are expressed by the perfect construction:

- (30) *būwélé nì, báá nì, dìi nì né wāà zē tèkétèké ē ē*
 rice PL sheep PL cow PL REL 3PL.PRF>3SG kill completely TOP 3SG.PST
tó gbāā tié.
 stay now fire
 ‘The rice, the sheep, the cows that they had killed completely, they were cooking now (lit.: they stayed on the fire now).’ (narr.)

If, however, the background event happened long before the reference point, the aorist construction is used.

- (31) *wā gèè à lèè é nū Moise là tóh sèfè yā*
 3PL.PST>3SG say 3SG to 3SG.CONJ come Moses 3SG.POSS law book:CS DEM
ká té kō ŋwūmébōmì ē à dōkē Israēl mià mósŋwò
 with REL 1PL savior 3SG.PST 3SG give Israel person.PL:CS because.of
yā.
 TOP
 ‘They told him to come with the book of the Law of Moses that our savior gave because of the people of Israel’ (They told Ezra the teacher of the

Law to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded for Israel, NIV, Ne 8:1).

The Perfect can also be used in temporal clauses with habitual meaning, or with reference to the future, as well as in the real protasis of conditional clauses. The construction is the same in both cases.⁴ The protasis is closely tied to the apodosis by the causal relation, so the Aorist can never be used in this position.

- (32) yé āà ɓɓ nɔ yílí gbùò yā bí m̀ò ɓ, léè
 when 3SG.PRF arrive only tree big DEM shadow on TOP 3SG.IPFV
 wàà gbāā yílí gbùò ɓē gáná yí.
 enter:IPFV now tree big DEM root in
 ‘When she enters under the shadow of this big tree, she gets inside its
 root.’ (narr.)

7 Discussion

As suggested in the foundational works by Comrie (1976), McCoard (1978) and Dahl (1985), the general positive definition of perfect is the continuing relevance of a previous situation (Comrie 1976: 56). This definition seems to match the Perfect in Mano quite closely.

The resultative meaning is often considered the core meaning of perfect for semantic reasons (because the result is viewed as the clearest manifestation of the relevance of the situation), but also for diachronic reasons (as perfect is often a grammaticalized resultative construction, Plungian 2016). In contrast, the Mano Perfect, formed with an auxiliary and a verbal root, is no more analytical than any other TAMP construction in Mano and it is unlikely that it grammaticalized from a resultative construction.

Östen Dahl’s cross-linguistic study of parallel corpora (Bible translations into several European languages, Dahl 2014) confirms that the prototypical contexts for the perfect involve event relevance (cf.: “Take heart, daughter,” he said, “your faith has healed you.”, NIV, Ma 9:22). In these contexts, the target Bible verse was systematically translated with the use of a perfect construction. Note, however, that a different parallel corpus study focusing on a smaller corpus, consisting of translations of *Alice in Wonderland* and *Winnie the Pooh*, but on a larger linguistic sample, including the languages of the Balkans (Greek, Bulgarian, Macedonian),

⁴In the French spoken by Mano, especially by children, *quand* ‘when’ and *si* ‘if’ are often confused: *Tantie, si tu finis de travailler, on va lire?* ‘Aunty, if you finish working, we will read?’.

came to a different conclusion: that the semantic core of the European perfect is not current relevance, but experiential meaning (Sichinava 2016).⁵

Whether or not current relevance is at the core of the semantics of the European perfect, it seems to be the main parameter defining the Perfect and distinguishing it from the Aorist in Mano. The context of annulled result (§3.3) is a good test for this parameter as it yields strict complementarity: if the result of some action was overruled by some consequent action, the perfect construction cannot be used.⁶ On the contrary, when a certain past event is explicitly presented as a justification of a current or a future situation, as in example (21), the perfect construction is clearly preferred to the Aorist.

A relevant event expressed by the Perfect in Mano does not have to be recent. In routine conversation many relevant events are recent: moreover, when a pair of examples with the Aorist and the Perfect are evaluated by native speakers, they tend to analyze the latter as being more recent. Cross-linguistically, however, recency seems to be more of an implicature rather than part of the semantics. Non-recent perfects are very common: experiential perfect is typically not recent. In general, Dahl and Hedin (Dahl & Hedin 2000) analyze the “hot news” value as a late semantic development of perfects.

Perfects cross-linguistically often show important restrictions in combinations with temporal adverbs, as temporal specification “somehow detracts from the focusing on the result ... perhaps by transferring the attention to the time of the past event” (Dahl & Hedin 2000: 395). This is also the case for Mano (see §3.2). Compatibility with temporal adverbs, however, is also very idiosyncratic: some perfects combine freely with temporal adverbs of any kind (Maïsak 2016).

Another function of the Perfect in Mano is marking the coda of a narrative (§4.3). For William Labov (2001: 65), the function of the coda is indicating the “termination of the narrative by returning the time frame to the present”. The narrative can be put back into relationship with the present by dissociating the narrative time and the present time. This is the strategy used in Totela, a Bantu language (Crane 2015), where the narrative coda is marked by a prehodiernal affix which signals that the situation is excluded from (and is prior to) the temporal

⁵Note also that Dahl’s study which included several translations into the same language identified significant intralinguistic variation: the variation between translations into one language is often comparable in extent to that between languages.

⁶This test, however, is not universally applicable across languages. Events that have been overruled by some other event can still be relevant, as in the ex. 37 of Dahl’s questionnaire (Dahl 2000: 803): “[It is cold in the room. The window is closed.] Question: You OPEN the window (and closed it again)?”. Thus, while Mano prohibits the usage of the Perfect in this context, in the Nij dialect of Udi the Perfect is grammatical (Maïsak 2016).

domain of “now”. The Mano strategy is different: it uses the perfect construction which shifts the coda sentence from the domain of narrative past and associates it with the present. This is also the strategy used in the Nij dialect of Udi (Nakh-Dagestanian, Maïsak 2016).

The strongest cross-linguistically valid definition of perfect, surprisingly, is a negative one, namely, the property of *not* being a narrative tense (Lindstedt 2000). Narrative function is the “anti-prototype” of perfect, that is, “a set of uses that are left untouched until the final end of the grammaticalization process by which perfects expand into general pasts”, as occurred in spoken French (Dahl 2014: 280). Narrative forms are not always perfective in a language (cf. narrative present), but when they are, their usage in this context can serve as a distinction between a narrative perfective tense (which is often called aorist) and a perfect tense (cf. Maïsak 2016). This distinction is strongly supported in Mano.

Let us now turn to the transposition and anticipation functions of the Aorist and the Perfect. In the function of anticipation, the basic semantic opposition between the Aorist and the Perfect as constructions expressing “remote” and “recent” events is preserved: as the Aorist typically expresses more remote past events, the predictions framed in it are also expected to occur in the non-immediate future; meanwhile, since the Perfect expresses recent past events, the anticipated event described by the Perfect is seen as close at hand. As for the transposition function, when the reference point is transposed from the moment of enunciation to a certain moment (typically) in the past, again, the choice between the Aorist and the Perfect conforms to exactly the same tendencies as in regular occurrences: whether the focus event happened long or not so long before the reference point, whether it was still relevant at the reference point, etc.

8 Conclusion

This paper investigates the semantic differences between two perfective constructions in the Mano language, the Aorist and the Perfect. The paper uses various sources of data, including Östen Dahl’s classic questionnaire, but also spontaneous speech: narratives, routine conversations, and ritual speech, Christian and traditional. The Mano Perfect shares with the (much disputed) cross-linguistic prototype the function of expressing event relevance. At the same time, it shares the property of not being a narrative tense, which is a cross-linguistic “anti-prototype” of perfect and is in Mano reserved to the aorist construction, as well as the consecutive construction, which remained out of the scope of this paper. More interestingly, Mano Aorist and Perfect have two secondary functions,

namely, anticipation of future events and transposition to the past. It turns out that the secondary functions confirm the basic distinction between the Aorist and the Perfect, the latter maintaining a closer connection with the reference point.

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Abbreviations

1	1st person	NEG	negative
2	2nd person	PL	plural
3	3rd person	POSS	possessive
CONJ	conjunctive	PRF	perfect
COP	copula	PST	past
CS	construct state	REF	referential
DEM	demonstrative	REFL	reflexive
GER	gerund	REL	relative
INDEF	indefinite	SG	singular
IPFV	imperfect	TOP	topic
JNT	conjoint		

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